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THE PROSTITUTE, A POEM.

THE AUTHOR J. H. WYNNE.

—— FERUS ET CUPIDO,
SEMPER ARDENTES ACUENS SAGITTAS
COTE CRUENTA.

HOR.

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POEM

PROSPECTUS

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Ground-Work of the following Piece is a moral Tale, calculated to furniſh that Inſtruction to the Young and Gay, which they might not ſo readily imbibe from Performances of a more rigid Nature.—Sentiments, like Rudiments, are often beſt delivered in Verſe; and the little Ornaments of Poetry which are diffuſed through Works like theſe, generally prove more ſtriking and agreeable than the Chain of Argument and Reflexion which characteriſes the Productions of the ſtrict and ſevere moral Writers.

On ſuch Principles the Author offers his Piece to the Public, concerning which he has no more to add, but that he flatters himſelf he has not permitted his Verſe to tranſgreſs the common Rules of Meaſure, nor his Language thoſe of grammatical Propriety. What farther Merits or Defects the POEM may have, he ſubmits to the candid Reader to determine, as well as what Portion of Indulgence it may be proper to allow one who does not boaſt of being initiated in the Myſteries of PARNASSUS, or admitted as a Favourite of the MUSES.

THE PROSTITUTE.

AN humble Bard, as yet unknown to Fame,
Without a patron, and without a name;
Nor ſkill'd in academic walks to rove,
Which PHOEBUS and the tuneful ſiſters love,
With bold Deſign attempts, in ſimple lays,
A rude, unlabour'd, artleſs verſe to raiſe.
Of lawleſs loves he ſings, of guilty wiles;
Of raptures feign'd, falſe words, and treach'rous ſmiles;
Of tender looks, which point the burning dart,
And ſend it rankling to the melting heart:
Through mazy paths he points the dang'rous road,
Which ah! too many hapleſs maids have trod;
Whilſt new-born pleaſures round them ſeem to blow,
Till, loſt at length in labyrinths of woe,

Too late they curſe the falſe inſidious way,
Which from fair honour led their ſteps aſtray.

THUS in his cot, while ſome tir'd peaſant dreams,
Of yellow meads and ſoftly-gliding ſtreams,
On ev'ry ſide a glowing landſcape ſees,
And ruddy cluſters bending from the trees,
Lo! on the mountain's cloud-envelopp'd height
Lours the black ſtorm, beneath the veil of night,
The livid lightnings flaſh from either pole,
And waters roar, and mutt'ring thunders roll:
Down ruſh the torrents with impetuous ſway,
And bear the ſubject cottages away:
The ſimple ſwain, awaking with ſurpriſe,
Finds all the proſpect fade before his eyes,
And round his couch the gath'ring horrors riſe,
Till driving with the ſtream, he floats amain,
While tempeſts howl, and Jove deſcends in rain.

SUCH certain ruin waits the hapleſs maid,
By flatt'ring words, by faithleſs vows betray'd.
Be this our taſk to paint—the plaintive muſe,
No preſent theme more lofty ſtrives to chuſe.
If theſe ſad ſtrains awake the tender ſigh,
And call the tear from pity's melting eye,

If,

If, timely warn'd, they ſave one eaſy fair
From the ſharp tortures of the laſt deſpair,
Well is the labour ſpent, and well the time
Beſtow'd to build this pile of homely rhyme.
Perhaps, in future days, ſhe may aſpire
To more exalted ſtrains to ſtrike the lyre;
To ſing the progreſs of the regal line,
A race of heroes gen'rous and divine,
From whom our kings their ancient lineage claim,
And the long glories of the Saxon name;
But now ſhe drops all more ambitious views,
And thus in ſimple guiſe the moral tale purſues.

NEAR that renowned ſpot where late were paid
Due honours to great Shakeſpeare's ſacred ſhade,
Where the clear Avon rolls her ſilver flood,
A calm retreat and peaceful manſion ſtood,
Where dwelt in peace, by conſcious worth increas'd,
An ancient, wiſe, and venerable prieſt,
Whoſe ſoul nor av'rice nor ambition knew,
Dear to his friends, and to his duty true.
Along the vale of years he chearful trod,
And meekly bore the enſigns of his God.
His virtuous conſort, worthy ſuch a man,
Imbib'd his precepts, and purſu'd his plan;

Caught

Caught ev'ry virtue riſing in his ſoul,
And crown'd with love and conſtancy the whole.
Indulgent heav'n with two lov'd children fair,
Bleſs'd the ſtrict union of the happy pair.
The firſt a boy, by deſtiny decreed
To ſenſe and manly virtue to ſucceed:
A female offspring next, whoſe riſing charms
Were nurtur'd in a tender mother's arms,
As ſome fair flow'r (which from the neighb'ring plain,
The nymphs tranſplant to ſome more kind domain,
Near where nectareous ſtreams perpetual run,
And open only to the genial ſun)
Reflects the glories of his beamy ray,
And glows and bloſſoms in the face of day.
So bloom'd MELISSA in her early years,
And ſuch her mien, and ſuch her form appears.
Her cheek was fluſh'd with beauty's crimſon dye,
And mildeſt luſtre ſparkled in her eye;
On her lov'd face her parents with delight
Would gaze whole days, and dream of her by night.
On her their hearts were ſet; for her their love
Was wean'd to earth from heav'n and things above.
With ev'ry bright accompliſhment they ſought
To deck her perſon and enlarge her thought.
To wake the lute, and graceful to advance,
With ſwimming footſteps in the mazy dance;

With

With trilling voice to tune the melting lay,
Sweet as the linnet warbling from the ſpray:
All theſe were hers; and taught in ancient lore,
For her the claſſic pages ſpread their ſtore;
Nor wanted fortune for ſo great an aim,
Her ſire, not rich, was yet well known to fame;
What from his ſcanty coffers could not flow,
His kindred gladly on the child beſtow.
Meanwhile her brother ſpends his uſeful hours,
Where fair AUGUSTA rears her lofty tow'rs;
A faithful ſervant to his uncle made,
The wealthy merchant train'd him up to trade;
What him befel ſhall be hereafter ſhewn;
But of MELISSA's fate we here muſt ſpeak alone.

SCARCE ſixteen years had fill'd their deſtin'd courſe,
When ev'ry youth confeſs'd her beauty's force,
Sigh'd at her feet, and ſoft addreſſes paid,
And ſtrove to warm with love the bluſhing maid:
But one diſtinguiſh'd by his manly charms,
The young AMYNTOR woo'd her to his arms;
Stranger to vile deceit, and treach'rous art,
His tongue ſtill ſpoke the language of his heart,
With *ſoftneſs* mix'd indeed, but ſuch as well
Might ſuit the guileleſs lips from whence it fell;

But long, in vain, with fruitleſs pray'rs he ſtrove
To melt the frozen virgin into love.
" O may that Pow'r," ſhe ſaid, " who rules on high,
" Grant me a ſpotleſs MAID to live and die:
" Ne'er may I prove the ſtorms that paſſions raiſe,
" But peaceful live, and *ſingly* end my days,
" Free from the lover's care, the huſband's ſtrife,
" And never know the ſubject name of *wife*."

HER father oft' reprov'd the raſh requeſt,
So vainly to the Heav'nly Throne addreſs'd;
For ſtill the proffer'd bleſſing ſhe declines,
Each ſuitor ſtill at his hard fate repines,
While the cold maiden hears their tale unmov'd,
Nor dreams of loving, tho' by all belov'd!

AH! frail eſtate of mortals, weakly blind
To fortune, changing like the changing wind!—
Who now, that had the bright MELISSA view'd,
To whom in vain ſo many fondly ſu'd,
Who could believe, ere yet the circling ſun
His courſe had ſev'n years through the zodiac run,
That, loſt to honour and the ſenſe of fame,
She ſtood recorded on the liſts of ſhame:
Yet ſuch ſoft females are, when guilty arts
Seduce and triumph o'er their yielding hearts.—

Be warn'd, ye fair, who read this tragic ſtrain,
Nor let MELISSA's fate be regiſter'd in vain.

LONG had her coldneſs mortify'd the youth,
Who ſigh'd with fervour, conſtancy, and truth,
Till chance, at laſt, did her cold boſom move,
For life preſerv'd, to make returns of love.
'Twas in a vale, a pleaſant, calm retreat,
By trees o'erſhadow'd from the fretting heat,
At noon, retir'd, the fair MELISSA ſat,
And lur'd the fiſhes with a gilded bait,
Till, weary'd with the oft-repeated play,
Reclin'd upon the flow'ry bank ſhe lay.
On a low, bending branch her line was flung,
Which o'er the murm'ring ſtream neglectful hung,
While ſhe with deep attention ſtudy'd o'er
Th' inſtructive paſſages of hiſtoric lore;
As in a glaſs the various portraits view'd,
Of chiefs renown'd, who firm in virtue ſtood,
Amidſt the ſtorms of a degen'rate age,
Unmov'd by *tyrant force* or *factious rage*;
Youths, that long ſince for love or empire fought,
And Beauties, who the world's great changes wrought;
But thoſe above them all ſhe moſt admires,
Who conquer'd guilty flames, and wild deſires;

Chaſte

Chaſte Youths and Pious Maids, by all approv'd,
Dear to the world, by Heav'n itſelf belov'd;
And vainly wiſh'd with *theirs* to rank *her* name,
And ſhare the laurel of immortal fame.
Meanwhile, by chance, ſhe ſpy'd her ſlender hook
Gorg'd by ſome fiſh, the monſter of the brook,
And as ſhe haſtes the quiv'ring rod to free,
With arms extended o'er the bending tree,
The branch breaks ſhort;—whilſt in the ſwelling wave
MELISSA plung'd, had found a wat'ry grave,
And to her wiſh, expir'd a ſpotleſs MAID;
But that the young AMYNTOR thither ſtray'd,
Chaunting his ſonnets to the neighb'ring grove,
And blaming partial Fate and hapleſs Love.
He plung'd to ſave her.—In his vig'rous arms,
With faded beauty and diſorder'd charms,
The faithful lover pale and breathleſs bore
The trembling fair-one to the farther ſhore.—
What ſpeechleſs joy, what raptures warm'd his breaſt,
When to his view his miſtreſs roſe confeſs'd,
We here muſt paſs in brief.—Suffice to ſay,
That from that juſtly-memorable day,
MELISSA hearken'd to AMYNTOR's tale,
And well he hop'd his rhet'ric might prevail;
For oft' he met her at the early dawn,
When morn's firſt tears bedew'd the flow'ry lawn;

And oft', at ſilent eve, the groves among
They ſtray'd, and liſten'd to the ſolemn ſong
Of plaintive Philomel; each fleeting hour
Warm'd the cold maid, increas'd the lover's pow'r,
Till his MELISSA did his ſuit approve,
And what was *gratitude* converts to *love*:
Then mutual vows ſucceed; with many a pray'r,
By envious winds diſpers'd in empty air.—
Her mother ſaw the inclination riſe,
And read the growing paſſion in her eyes,
(Which long conceal'd, now burn'd more fiercely bright,
Like ſmother'd embers in the gloom of night.)
With ſoothing words the tender girl addreſs'd,
And calm'd the perturbations of her breaſt,
Nor diſapprov'd her choice; though inly griev'd,
Their hopes in her ſo oft' had been deceiv'd.
So many wealthy youths, the country's pride,
Rejected, and her parents ſuit deny'd:
Yet pleas'd at laſt their daughter ſhould fulfil
Their common wiſh, and grant a father's will,
The matron yields her to the maid's deſire,
And gently breaks the matter to her ſire:
He with conſenting ſmiles the news receiv'd,
But fears her innocence might be deceiv'd:
With kindly caution ſecretly he ſought
The am'rous youth by whom this change was wrought;

His birth, his means, and temper he enquires,
And ſtill the more he hears, the more admires.
At length, his full conſent their loves obtain'd,
And but the ceremony nought remain'd,
To give AMYNTOR whom he did adore,
And join their hands, whoſe hearts were join'd before.

BUT Deſtiny the mighty boon deny'd,
And tore the bridegroom from his promis'd bride;
So vain the ſtrongeſt wiſhes mortals raiſe
An airy fabric, which too ſoon decays,
An empty phantom, like thoſe forms of night,
Which melt, and vaniſh with approaching light.—

WHO but AMYNTOR, now, with joy poſſeſt,
Feels pleaſure's pulſe high beating in his breaſt,
While the kind maid conſumes with ſecret fires,
And foſters gentle hopes and ſoft deſires;
Their Fates unknown, they nuptial rites prepare,
And ſummon many a friend with fruitleſs care;
For young AMYNTOR's evil ſtars had pow'r
To drive far off the happy, genial hour.
A dying parent now his aid demands,
Ere yet the prieſt had ty'd the ſacred bands.—
A diſtant county claim'd AMYNTOR's birth,
Where dwelt his ſire, a man of wealth and worth;

There

There long he liv'd, in peaceful affluence bleſt,
But now drew near to his eternal reſt.—
The ſudden ſummons fill'd his ſon with woe,
Faſt heave his ſighs, his tears in torrents flow:
Such poignant pangs the hapleſs lovers felt,
As might the moſt obdurate boſom melt,
When the good youth the ſad command obey'd,
Which tore him, weeping, from his fav'rite maid.
As ſome fond mother leaves her Darling Care,
To tempt the waves, or mingle in the war:
As ſouls, reluctant, from their bodies part,
When life's laſt pulſe beats quiv'ring at the heart;
So from MELISSA her lov'd youth withdrew,
So ſad MELISSA ſicken'd at the view:
And long in vain her tender parents try'd
Each ſoothing art, each healing balm apply'd,
Till the fair hopes of promis'd bliſs relieve
Her woe-fraught breaſt, and grant a ſhort reprieve:
Till leſs and leſs the maid begins to mourn
His abſence, who ſo quickly ſhould return;
While letters from AMYNTOR's hand relate
His father's death, his mourning mother's ſtate,
And promis'd e'er nine times the riſing light,
From the dun air had chac'd the ſhades of night,
He would in perſon on her fire attend,
And ſeal the promiſe of a faithful friend.

In Lovers eyes, how ſlowly Time devours
The fleeting race of quickly-dying hours!
Nine days Melissa waits, a tenth in vain
Roſe on the earth, but to renew her pain
As many more ſucceed;—no news ſhe hears
Of him ſhe loves; which fills her heart with fears.
To young Amyntor now her Father writes,
In ſecret ſhe, another note indites:
Both went, but ſped not;—anſwer none return'd;
And now her heart with ſwelling anguiſh burn'd;
Then Shame takes place, and Love, (a mingled train)
Joy's ſmiling offspring joins the race of Pain;
Contending Paſſions in her boſom roll,
Diſtract her mind and ſhake her inmoſt ſoul.

While thus ſhe grieves, ſtill new misfortunes riſe,
Her tender mother moſt untimely dies,
By a conſuming fever meets her fate,
Nor lives to ſee her daughter's wretched ſtate.
From diff'rent ſources mingled ſorrows flow,
Which form a ſad variety of woe.—
All theſe Melissa felt in early youth;
Yet ſway'd by conſcious worth and ſpotleſs truth,
Some ſmall relief each piercing pang could find,
Each woe made lighter by a conſtant mind:

Alas!

Alas! too ſoon far other griefs to prove,
Which nought but *guilt* could give, and nought but *death* remove.

Six mourning months had paſs'd, ſince low in earth
Her relicks lay, who gave Melissa birth,
When a great lord, retiring from the ſeat
Of noiſe and hurry, ſought a calm retreat,
Built by his frugal anceſtors of yore,
Who with the Norman touch'd the Britiſh ſhore.—
On a fair lawn, emboſom'd in a wood,
An eaſy journey off the manſion ſtood
From that neat ſpot, where late Melissa's ſire
Had ſeen the darling of his ſoul expire,
Cloſe bord'ring on the village was the grove,
Where fair Melissa ow'd her life to Love:
There oft ſhe ſtray'd in melancholy guiſe,
While former objects met her drooping eyes,
Which to her mind recall'd the abſent ſwain,
The ſource of all her pleaſure and her pain.
One morn, the heat and fury of the chace
Had brought the Baron Claudio to the place,
Where the ſad maid, ſlow-muſing, wander'd o'er
The various paths ſhe oft had trac'd before.
The ſtranger-youth beholds her with delight,
Her beauteous form attracts his wond'ring ſight,

Seen through the veil of grief; yet winning grace
Adorn'd her form, while tears bedew'd her face,
To which a burning bluſh ſucceeding, ſhews
As wet with vernal ſhow'rs the damaſk roſe.

Fir'd with the view of ſuch tranſcendant charms,
Claudio diſmounts, to claſp her in his arms;
She flies, he follows with reſiſtleſs courſe;
But, overtaking, fails to uſe his force:
Such pow'r has Virtue;—he obſequious ſtands,
Whilſt of her dwelling only he demands:
Ev'n this had been deny'd, but now drawn nigh,
The homely building meets his ſearching eye.
Melissa ent'ring, he, with modeſt grace,
Seems to retire, but, careful, marks the place.
Hither each morn he haſtes with reſtleſs cares,
In diff'rent garbs, and various arts prepares:
Still of her ſtate aſſiduous to enquire,
Her age, her friends, the temper of her ſire:
Of all inform'd, at length, one ſtormy day,
As if by accident he loſt his way,
The Baron came:—The maſter of the dome
Welcomes the wand'ring traveller to his home:
His daughter next appears, whoſe glowing cheek
Confeſs'd what Fear forbad her tongue to ſpeak;

While

While the ſly ſtranger ply'd his utmoſt art,
To gain his hoſt, and win his Miſtreſs' heart.

CLAUDIO, the gay, the wealthy, and the young,
Was bleſs'd with matchleſs eloquence of tongue,
And that ſoft-ſoothing, wily pow'r poſſeſt,
Which moſt can triumph o'er a virgin's breaſt,
But wanted VIRTUE, that alone can raiſe
On Honour's baſe, the glorious pile of Praiſe.
Full many' a tender parent had he griev'd,
And many' a maid with treach'rous vows deceiv'd.—
Such CLAUDIO was, whom yet his hoſt admires,
And, parting, ſtill his preſence he deſires.
Another viſit follows: With ſurprize,
The homely prieſt his alter'd habit ſpies,
And deems his roof too mean for ſuch a gueſt,
Who now in all his ſplendour ſhone confeſt:
But ſoon he knows him for the only child,
Of one, who on *his* infant fortunes ſmil'd;
Call'd forth his merit to the public view,
And prov'd thro' life a conſtant friend and true:
This viſit paſt, and this diſcov'ry o'er,
The new-met friends are ſtrangers now no more.

To chace the clouds of grief, the Peer invites
The pious Prieſt to taſte ſuch new delights

As

As his demeſnes or noble gueſts cou'd bring;
While yet the joyleſs months delay'd the ſpring:
His daughter muſt attend.—They reach the ſeat,
And from it's lord a noble welcome meet.
[Sorrow, the child of Care delights to dwell
In lonely ſhades or melancholy cell:
From crowded halls with reſtleſs pace ſhe flies,
In cities ſickens;—but in courts ſhe dies.]
The good URBINO found at laſt this truth,
Nor more MELISSA pin'd in early youth;
Pleaſure and Joy in her ſoft boſom reign,
(Joy ſoon to fade, and Pleaſure bought with Pain.)
For now young CLAUDIO, with accuſtom'd art
Explores her mind, and ſtrives to touch her heart:
At diſtance ſounds her, finds her chaſte and cold,
And hears the loſt AMYNTOR's ſtory told:
Surpriz'd, he ſtarts;—affects to know his name,
Then many' a tale recounts, to blaſt his fame.
The maiden droops while with officious cares,
CLAUDIO, the miſchiefs he has caus'd repairs,
Calls to her cheek the ebbing crimſon tide,
And healing words, and needful aid apply'd;
Then ſighing, wiſh'd ſuch truth as hers to find,
And much her *charms* extoll'd, but more her *mind*,
(A feeling heart as melting grief muſt prove,
So grief when pity'd, ſoon converts to love.)

By

By arts like theſe, in ſpecious ſemblance dreſt,
Inſenſibly he warm'd her guardleſs breaſt.
Still in his ear ſhe pours her tale of woe,
And ſtill with hers, his mimic ſorrows flow,
Till in her mind a wond'rous change ſhe proves,
On loſt AMYNTOR calls, but preſent CLAUDIO loves.—
Nor think it ſtrange, that ſhe who lately mourn'd
For young AMYNTOR, that no more return'd,
Once having torn his image from her breaſt,
Should by another paſſion be poſſeſs'd:
'Twas thus that cruel Love aveng'd his cauſe,
And twice enforc'd her to confeſs his laws;
His pow'r had touch'd her heart; the raging flame
Had chang'd its object, but its force the ſame,
Still on her ſoul with wonted ardour prey'd,
Rul'd in her mind, and all her actions ſway'd:
Of CLAUDIO's worth her father highly deem'd,
His Patron hail'd him, and his Friend eſteem'd:
The baron's father had a worthy claim,
To all that might deſerve ſo dear a name;
Nor leſs URBINO thought the gen'rous ſon
Might ſeal that friendſhip, which the ſire begun:
For this, ſecure he truſts his Patron's cares,
Nor ſees the miſchief which his ſoul prepares.

CLAUDIO exulting views his frauds obtain,
While from another's loſs he counts his gain;
Now cloſer arts he plies;—of Love he talks,
And wooes his miſtreſs in their ſecret walks.
(Ingenuous minds too oft by truth betray'd,
Are eaſy conqueſts to deceivers made.)
MELISSA ſcarce the growing fire ſuppreſs'd,
But almoſt owns the change within her breaſt:
O'erjoy'd, the Baron hears; anew aſſails,
And fills her eaſy mind with ſoothing tales,
Such as fond maids too eaſily believe,
And crafty lovers practiſe to deceive;
And now, (but that her father rais'd his fear,
Whoſe watchful cares might ſtop his bad career)
Much more had follow'd; and the hand of chance,
As if his evil purpoſe to advance,
Too ſoon that bar removes.—How frail our breath,
Who in the midſt of life ſtill verge on death.
Whilſt all the gueſts in jollity remain,
MELISSA's fire is ſeiz'd with ſudden pain;
His nerves contracted, and his ſtagnate blood
Congeal'd, obſtructing the warm vital flood.
Strait to his chamber by the ſervants born,
They wait his life and ſenſes ſlow return.
His daughter and his friends around him wait,
And mourn with fruitleſs tears his wretched ſtate;

The

The ſage phyſicians balmy aids impart,
But here in vain exert their healing art.

The prieſt perceiv'd their fears, and ſoon deſcry'd
What they, with kind deceit, had ſtrove to hide.
" In vain" he cry'd, " my friends you would eſſay,
" To raiſe my hopes;—your looks your minds betray,
" Through death's black gates I paſs to touch that ſhore,
" Where millions haſte, and millions went before:
" Reſign'd I paſs;—one duty yet I owe,
" To her who ſtill has claim'd my love below.
" My helpleſs daughter.—In an uncle's care,
" In plenty lives my ſcanty fortune's heir.
" His ſiſter, helpleſs, claims the little aid
" I can diſpenſe; a poor but virtuous maid,
" May Heav'n direct her innocence and youth,
" To trace fair Virtue in the paths of Truth!
" This precious pledge, methinks, I fain would truſt,
" To one whom ſenſe and honour render juſt,
" Whoſe elder prudence might her ways direct,
" Whoſe ſenſe enlighten, and whoſe pow'r protect:
" Such could I find my laſt great care would ceaſe,
" And the cold tomb receive my corpſe in peace."

He ceas'd, and CLAUDIO gladly took the word,
And the dark meaning of the ſpeech explor'd;

Rightly

Rightly he judg'd himſelf the perſon meant,
And ſeconded with joy his friend's intent.
Off'ring to take MELISSA to his care,
And kindly grant the dying parent's pray'r,
Who now, well pleas'd that duty to fulfill,
Reſigns him, patient, to the heav'nly will.

The parting who ſhall paint? what ſorrows flow,
What grief of heart, and what exceſs of woe,
When the ſad maid reluctant left her ſire;
Whom morn' beheld without a groan expire.—
To him funereal rites and honours paid,
The baron turns him to the orphan maid.
Her *guardian* now and *hoſt*, a double name
To his eternal infamy and ſhame!
Soon as the ſudden guſts of ſorrow paſs'd,
In ſtorms of grief too violent to laſt.
Again his ſuit the wily peer renew'd,
With double warmth the artleſs girl purſu'd.
With many a golden bait he ſtrove to win
Her eaſy heart, and lure her into ſin.
But much too firm to honour's ſacred laws,
He found her virtue baffled ſtill his cauſe.
Convinc'd at length, the laſt ſure way he try'd,
Applauds her worth, and wooes her for his bride.

What

What female could reſiſt the pow'rful charms
Of wealth and honours offer'd to her arms,
With added love.—Of promis'd glory vain,
MELISSA, pleas'd her heart's beſt wiſh to gain,
(AMYNTOR now forgot) in CLAUDIO's breaſt
Her cares repos'd, on whom her fortunes reſt,
Who ſwears, ere ſummer-ſuns their influence ſhed
On the glad earth, to take her to his bed.

MEANWHILE from diſtant parts, where trade requir'd
His preſence, while his aged ſire expir'd,
Young CELADON, her brother, now return'd,
Who long to ſee his orphan ſiſter, burn'd.
He firſt was told that to his patron's care,
URBINO, dying, had conſign'd the fair,
And from MELISSA now his praiſes hears,
Praiſes which fill'd his honeſt heart with fears:
For he had known the arts and treach'rous wiles,
With which Falſe Love unwary maids beguiles,
Had mark'd the characters on life's great ſtage,
And bought experience at an early age;
CLAUDIO he ſounds, nor fails in him to find
A taſte deprav'd, and a degen'rate mind:
Then warns MELISSA to avoid his train,
He warn'd her early, but he warn'd in vain:

Urg'd on by love, his counſel ſhe derides,
With ſcorn receives him, and with anger chides.

Repuls'd, her monitor was forc'd to yield
To paſſion's ſway the long-conteſted field,
Yet watch'd her conduct with a brother's care,
As much he wiſh'd to guard her from the ſnare
Which Claudio, like a wily fowler ſpread,
Whoſe fatal lure to ſure deſtruction led.
From all his words and deeds new doubts ariſe,
Till Celadon one final effort tries:—
Some truſty ſpies he plac'd, who quickly found
An hour when mirth and ſparkling wine went round,
'Tis then baſe purpoſes are leaſt conceal'd,
And Claudio then his inmoſt ſoul reveal'd,
Swearing an orphan girl he ne'er ſhould wed,
Nor take a mean plebeian to his bed,
But for his ſport alone the maid deſign'd,
Whom chance ſo blindly to his charge reſign'd.
All this the hearers to her brother bore,
He to Melissa tells the ſtory o'er,
Conjures her by her father's honour'd name,
Her mother's chaſtity and ſpotleſs fame,
To fly the baſe betrayer's treach'rous art,
And tear his worthleſs image from her heart;

But

But vain is *reaſon* urg'd where *paſſion* ſways;
The latent fires, call'd forth, more fiercely blaze;
By anger heighten'd, with a crimſon dye,
Glow on her cheek, and kindle in her eye.
She ſwears ſome villain has traduc'd her lord,
Foe to his name, or rival of his ſword;
Nor CELADON was ſpar'd, but tax'd with hate,
And meaneſt envy of her happy ſtate.
—Ill conſcious worth ſuch vile reproach could bear,
Reproach unmerited, as moſt ſevere.
Words following words, at length, that fatal night,
MELISSA chid her brother from her ſight:
Griev'd, he departs at once, and never more,
Found entrance at the cruel baron's door,
Who ſoon forbad his preſence, glad to find
His miſtreſs' temper anſwering to his mind:
Her father now and brother both away,
Bereft of friends, and eaſy to betray.

THE months roll on, and ſwiftly as they glide,
Freſh blooming hopes increaſe the virgin's pride,
Who ſoon expects to be a joyful bride.
But other thoughts inſpir'd her CLAUDIO's breaſt,
And guilty paſſions rob his heart of reſt:
Not that the crime of Innocence betray'd
By its own guard, could make his ſoul afraid;

But

But that the talking world excites his dread,
When Rumour's tongue the heinous deed ſhould ſpread.
Great though he was, of glaring titles proud,
To wealth ſuperior more than Heav'n he bow'd:
A rich old kinſman much he ſtrove to pleaſe,
Who diſapprov'd his plan of vicious eaſe,
And threaten'd oft' his treaſur'd heaps to give,
To ſtrangers, that by virtuous rules wou'd live.

For this, gay Claudio in his mid-career,
Oft' check'd his paſſions with the rein of Fear;
(A ſervile motive, uſeleſs in employ,
To raiſe one Virtue, or one Vice deſtroy.)
For this he, cautious, paus'd, till he ſhou'd find
Some fav'ring period for the plot deſign'd;
Meanwhile ſo much her guardleſs heart he gains,
An eaſier conqueſt ev'ry day remains.

'Twas ſmiling May;—glad Spring led on the hours,
And deck'd the teeming earth with fragrant flow'rs;
In parks and fields the gay Melissa roves,
For Claudio there diſcourſes of his loves;
And oft' (return'd at eve) the goblet, crown'd
With gentle muſic's ſoul-diſſolving ſound:
Each paſſion ſooth'd, and ev'ry joy increas'd,
For Claudio there is maſter of the feaſt.—

One fatal night, when mirth and wine ran high,
And pleaſure ſparkled in each ſwimming eye,
His tale of love he eagerly purſues,
And ev'ry ſolemn, tender vow renews.
Th' aſſembly broken, when his charge withdraws,
He follows cloſe, and pleads a lover's cauſe,
With double ardour gazes on her charms,
And folds her panting, trembling, in his arms,
With tears, with oaths, with fervent, melting ſighs,
Atteſting earth, and heav'n, and ſeas, and ſkies,
And that tremendous Pow'r who form'd the whole,
To witneſs to his purity of ſoul,
To witneſs that he wou'd MELISSA wed,
And make her partner of his lawful bed.
Yet had he not the ſhameful conqueſt gain'd,
But in her heart a cruel tyrant reign'd;
But that her reaſon had its ſway reſign'd,
And wild confuſion ſeiz'd her troubled mind:
In vain againſt th' united force ſhe ſtrove,
Of pow'rful wine, and more prevailing love;
And whilſt for aid in falt'ring words ſhe calls,
Half-forc'd, half-yielding, in the ſnare ſhe falls.—
The guilty ſcene, Night's blackeſt mantle ſhrouds,
To hide its infamy in ſable clouds,
But Fame's broad eyes th' atrocious deed ſurvey,
Which her loud trump proclaims in open day.

THUS fell MELISSA, tender, young and fair,
So late a father's joy, a mother's care;
Fell from the precepts of her worthy ſire,
Victim of lawleſs love and lewd deſire;
Her mother's blameleſs chaſtity forgot,
Become a villain's prey, a tyrant's lot,
Who ne'er ſhew'd mercy to one hapleſs maid,
By evil fortune to his hands betray'd.

SUCH ruin ſtill on Paſſion's reign attends,
When to its pow'r, the weaker Reaſon bends;
Such evils wait on thoſe who heedleſs ſtray
From Virtue's path to Pleaſure's devious way.
On ev'ry ſide a thouſand ills abound,
Amaze the judgement, and the ſenſe confound:
Loſt and bewilder'd through the maze they roam,
Their reſtleſs ſouls can find no peaceful home,
On dazzling objects fixing fond deſire,
And vainly following ſtill a wand'ring fire,
Whoſe glare deludes them to their lateſt breath,
And leads to ſhame, to miſery, and death.

IN *men*, ſtrict Honour and unblemiſh'd Truth
Preſerv'd through age, as taught in early youth,
Are Virtue's bond;—a *woman's* nicer fame
Bids Chaſtity aſſume that Virtue's name:—

The

The gem once fully'd, we attempt in vain
It's former price and luſtre to regain,
The Bond once broke we vainly ſtrive to tie:
The ſcatter'd virtues from their ſtandard fly.
O then be wiſe! avoid that loſt eſtate,
And timely fly temptation's gilded bait.
So ſhall your days with ſmiling peace be crown'd,
In life ſtill happy, and in death renown'd.

But now the Muſe returns with grief to ſhew
The mournful ſtory of Melissa's woe,
What future toils the hapleſs maid await,
In ſimply-plaintive numbers to relate,
Such as ſoft pity in the breaſt may move,
And guard the virgin's heart from treach'rous love.

The morn ſucceeding found the fair in tears,
But artful Claudio, ſoon diſpell'd her fears,
With ſhort-liv'd comfort ſoothing ſtill the pain,
Which late reflexion foſter'd in her brain.
His ſpeech a balm to her ſad ſpirits prov'd,
For much ſhe credited, *ſince much ſhe lov'd.*—
Meanwhile the hours roll on with fleeting pace,
Swift-following ſtill in time's perpetual race;
The early months their infant beauties hide,
And fade, retreating from the ſummer's pride,

While

While warmer ſuns their genial influence ſhed,
The future harveſt rears its wavy head,
The cluſt'ring fruits on bending ſtalks are ſeen,
And nodding woods aſſume a deeper green.

Now thrice the Moon her wonted courſe had run,
Since by the peer, MELISSA was undone;
Each day ſucceeding, in its circle paſs'd,
And as the firſt, unheeded went the laſt:
No tidings yet of marriage glad her ears,
But growing ſigns alarm her heart with fears;
The fair grows pregnant by the treach'rous Lord,
And now reminds him of his plighted word:
He hears, and leaves her, ſome excuſe pretends,
And ſtill more briefly ev'ry viſit ends:
MELISSA mark'd how ſoon her love withdrew,
And took no pleaſing omen from the view.
Again ſhe moves him, and her ſtate declares—
Again the peer a new excuſe prepares:
His kinſman's free conſent he firſt muſt have;—
That kinſman ſoon lies in his peaceful grave,
To CLAUDIO leaving all his heaps of gold,
Whoſe growing pride no longer is control'd:
Reſtraint thrown off, no more he feigns regard
For his too credulous, much injur'd ward:

One

One morn' he ſends her back her parent's charge,
Deducting many a ſum, with int'reſt large,
For various articles his meanneſs choſe
To fix on her, though from his will they roſe.
With theſe law-ſcrolls a cruel note he ſent,
Which in few words diſcover'd his intent:
He there inform'd her, he ſhould quit the land,
To ſeek the Gallic or Iberian ſtrand;
Advis'd her ſpeedily to find ſome friend,
Who might her ſmall and ſcanty fortune mend;
Then, as a jeſt, of his own vows made light,
And told her, *others* had a prior right;
Twice three he mention'd, and remark'd each name,
Then rank'd *her* lateſt on the liſt of ſhame;
Laſt, in plain terms, her abſence he enjoin'd,
From that his ſeat, for other gueſts deſign'd,
Whoſe haſty preſence there he had implor'd,
To take the office of its abſent lord.

Melissa reads, and ſickens at the ſight,
Her cloſing eyes exclude the chearful light,
She faints—The damſels, who from far ſurvey,
With care reſtore her to unwelcome day.
Then burſts of paſſion ſhake her tender frame,
Such as attend Veſuvius' burſting flame,

While yet the lab'ring earth conceals the fire,
Ere from its womb the glowing flakes expire;
To theſe, a dead and ſullen calm ſucceeds,
Such as in air a dying tempeſt breeds.—
Soon from the hated houſe her courſe ſhe bends,
One faithful ſervant on her courſe attends,
Whom in her happier days ſhe much had lov'd,
And now her truth and gratitude approv'd:
Strait to the capital the wand'rer came,
Where beſt ſhe judg'd ſhe might conceal her ſhame.—
But ſtill misfortunes on her footſteeps wait,
Purſu'd by angry heav'n, abandon'd to her fate.—
Her dwelling there ADORIO chanc'd to find,
A youth, by CLAUDIO, for her bed deſign'd,
Who firſt had ſought her at the Baron's ſeat,
Ere yet he knew of her ſo ſwift retreat:
And now firſt met, an artful ſpeech he frames,
And CLAUDIO as a vile Deceiver names,
Flatters MELISSA's rage, in hopes to prove,
Her anger gratify'd, might change to love:
Nor fails the ſchemer in his deep deſigns,
The fair her perſon to his arms reſigns,
With all thoſe ſhatter'd fortunes CLAUDIO left,
Since now of ev'ry friend but Hope bereft;
Hope, that from ſmall beginnings ſtill extends
Her infant wings, and ever upward tends,

Till

Till airy heights on billowy clouds ſhe tries,
Spurns the low earth, and emulates the ſkies;
Hope bade her take the falſe ADORIO's word,
Who promis'd vengeance on her cruel lord.
But he alas! had paid a price agreed
To his unhallow'd pleaſures to ſucceed,
And chang'd his miſtreſs to confirm the deed.
This when MELISSA knew, with anger fir'd,
From the baſe man with ſcorn ſhe ſtrait retir'd.—
But now with fleeting months her burden grew,
No more to be conceal'd from public view.
In an obſcure retreat MELISSA lay,
And ſadly paſs'd the tedious hours away,
Till the ninth moon, by many a ſigh beguil'd,
Foe to her peace, produc'd a lifeleſs child.

HER ſtore decreas'd; for much had CLAUDIO drain'd,
And with the falſe ADORIO much remain'd,—
Both far too great for equitable laws
To cite;—for who defends the Orphan's cauſe.
He brother ſhe had ſought, though full of ſhame;
But none remains that owns her kindred name;
He with his uncle to the Indian ſhore
Had ſail'd; from whence the firſt return'd no more.
She would ſome richer, happier fair attend,
But none accepts her;---for ſhe wants a friend.

Her

Her money fail'd; no other means ſhe knew,
Than thoſe which from her former errors grew.
To alien Loves her venal charms are ſold,
Her beauty barter'd for deſtructive gold.
Firſt with a merchant thus, MELISSA liv'd,
Till foreign lands the man of trade receiv'd:
Again deſerted, other aids ſhe tries,
And next becomes a gen'rous Soldier's prize,
Gen'rous indeed; but narrow was his power;
Eternal needs his ſcanty means devour;
At length, in fighting fields he bravely dy'd,
And his deceaſe a wealthier love ſupply'd.
His noble Patron, who by chance had ſpy'd
The fair MELISSA, ſtill in Beauty's pride:
Enamour'd, gazing on her youthful charms,
With largeſt proffers woo'd her to his arms.
Pleas'd, ſhe conſents, and high exalted ſate,
In all the pageantry of mimic ſtate.
Won by the pomp which noble ſcenes diſplay,
Falſe, flattering pleaſures, courting to betray.
No more for ancient peace MELISSA mourns,
No more with ſhame for Virtue loſt, ſhe burns:
But high advanc'd, with borrow'd luſtre bright,
Shines, like ſome meteor, with portentous light.

MEANWHILE from foreign ſhores, where bravely dy'd
Full many' a gallant youth, his country's pride,
The boaſt and flow'r of war, and where remain,
The laſt ſad relicks of AMYNTOR ſlain.
VALERIO came, a veteran of worth,
Who claim'd his friendſhip by a kindred birth.
By chance, as to MELISSA's lord he ſues,
And ancient leagues of amity renews,
AMYNTOR's name and fatal ſtory told,
The damſel hears, and begs him to unfold
What of the youth deceas'd he farther knew,
And how his death and hapleſs fortunes grew.—
She finds a cruel brother's treach'rous art,
Had torn the lover from her bleeding heart.
Detain'd by ſickneſs from his promis'd bride,
A wicked brother, who his place ſupply'd,
Conceal'd the letters from her hand receiv'd,
And young AMYNTOR's eaſy faith deceiv'd;
Who much incens'd no anſwer to obtain.
When newly riſing from his bed of pain,
Hears that his miſtreſs a rich baron lov'd,
And to his care and guardianſhip remov'd
Her perſon and effects.—Oppreſs'd with grief,
In fighting fields at length he found relief:

On Gallia's coaſt * a new command he bore,
And periſh'd bravely on the fatal ſhore.

VALERIO mark'd within MELISSA's breaſt
The heaving ſigh that inward grief confeſs'd:
And ſtood ſurpriz'd; but when he came to know,
From other hands, the ſtory of her woe:
Soft pity touch'd his heart, and ſtrait he made
In private ſort, an offer of his aid,
To free her from the chains, which Vice had thrown
O'er her free mind. And having briefly ſhewn
Th' eternal ignominy, guilt, and ſhame,
That brand a PROSTITUTE's devoted name,
He kindly offers, for AMYNTOR's ſake,
That ſhe his ſlender fortunes ſhould partake,
'Till Fate ſome better ſtation might provide,
And other means be to her wants ſupply'd.

VALERIO's words ſunk deeply in her mind,
But yet for pomp and luxury ſhe pin'd.
A diſtant day to make reply ſhe names;
When that arrives, another ſtill ſhe claims,
Till weary'd with his cares, ſhe tells him plain,
His pious labour is beſtow'd in vain.

* St. Cas.

'TWAS

'Twas then her Guardian Pow'r forſook her ſide,
And gave her up to Folly, Vice, and Pride:
Succeeding days ſtill new exceſſes ſaw,
Repeated guilt, and violated law.
Meanwhile her earl, on whom ſhe moſt relies,
On other beauties caſts his wand'ring eyes.—
To one of theſe the hapleſs fair gives place,
(For with her FULVIUS, novelty is grace)
Nay more, a vile excuſe he baſely frames,
And for her paramour, a ſervant names;
To hide the fraud at once they both muſt go,
And ſeek ſuch fortunes as their ſtars beſtow.

A LATE repentance now MELISSA, finds;
Her dreams of greatneſs vaniſh in the winds;
Grief and exceſs a dang'rous ſickneſs bring,
Her op'ning beauties wither in their ſpring.
Her means are waſted; her bright eyes forego
Their ſparkling fires; her cheeks forget to glow.
When youthful vigour wonted health regains,
The ſhadow only of herſelf remains.
No more her ſhape and mien each ſwain admir'd,
Her charms no more each longing eye deſir'd;
Still in her prime, ſhe feels advancing age,
And verges ſwiftly tow'rds her life's laſt ſtage;

While worn with ſickneſs, and oppreſt with care,
She ſeeks the laſt ſad refuge of Deſpair:
A thouſand ills ſtill interpoſe between,
Till common PROSTITUTION ends the ſcene.

YE guardians of the fair, whoſe care directs,
Whoſe wiſdom guides them, and whoſe pow'r protects,
For you the moral bard theſe ſtrains eſſays,
To you he dedicates the artleſs lays,
Which no vile ſcenes, no ribald jeſts profane,
No lewdneſs blackens, nor bad morals ſtain.
'Tis not his charge to draw thoſe ills that wait
On PROSTITUTION in its loſt eſtate;
To paint the deed obſcene, the wanton eye,
"The ill-bred queſtion, and the lewd reply."*
Let Fancy feign them:—could his honeſt verſe,
The num'rous troubles, heart-felt pangs rehearſe;
The fears, the cares, remorſe, and piercing pain,
The wand'ring wretches in their hearts ſuſtain,
Their endleſs toils and miſeries diſplay,
Which Night and all her conſcious ſtars ſurvey,
Such could he draw in lively tints, and ſhew
From *guilt* apart, the various ſcenes of woe,
Which theſe ſad daughters of Affliction know.

* Prior.

The

The diſmal horrors ſuch a ſcene imparts,
Muſt pierce, perforce, the moſt obdurate hearts;
Muſt check the wildeſt in their mid-career,
And teach the moſt abandon'd how to fear.—

Two joyleſs years had paſs'd, ſince in the train,
Who join the revels of the midnight reign,
The loſt MELISSA had inroll'd her name,
And bought with forfeit peace eternal ſhame.
Full many a reſtleſs night and weary day,
Paſſing in ſad anxiety away,
When angry Heav'n yet one affliction more
Was pleas'd to ſend from its eternal ſtore:
The dire ſmall-pox intrenches deep her face,
Which quickly blaſts each yet remaining grace:
And, while her haunts her ſcar'd companions fly,
Alone ſhe ſtands and "doubts to live or die."

'TWAS now Remorſe, wild working in her breaſt,
Her lab'ring heart with heavieſt woes poſſeſt,
Now ſhe reſolves the piteous ſight to ſhew
To CLAUDIO, cauſe of all her guilt and woe.
Thus full of miſery ſhe ſought his gate,
With whom ſhe liv'd in next to regal ſtate.—
Paſt were thoſe hours of guilty, fond delight,
When *feaſts* the day, and *love* beguil'd the night;

Then high MELISSA ſat, and boldly vain,
Durſt mix with Princes in the ſocial train;
Now humbled to the duſt, the weeping fair,
Aſks the ſad pittance of a morſel there.—
" Go tell your maſter, my once honour'd lord,
" 'Tis I, the late companion of his board,
" I, who with muſic have enhanc'd his feaſt,
" Each joyful day, and ſooth'd each night to reſt.
" When 'midſt the rural ſcenes he joy'd to rove,
" And ſhare their ſweets with her who ſhar'd his love."

IN vain ſhe ſpoke, while mingling rage and grief,
By tears ſucceeded, gave her woes relief.
And CLAUDIO now forth iſſuing to the place,
Low at his feet ſhe kneels, and ſues for grace.
Not ſuch as from a youth betroth'd became,
To the fair partner of his honeſt flame,
Not ſuch as favour'd paramours would claim;
But ſuch as common Charity might grant
To pallid ſickneſs, miſery, and want:
Some ſmall relief to ſtay life's ebbing tide
She aſks, and hears that wretched boon deny'd.
The cruel CLAUDIO broke with ſcorn away,
Sprang from her feeble hold, and ſpurn'd her as ſhe lay.

The

The next ſuggeſtion that poſſeſs'd her mind
Was dead Amyntor's generous friend to find:
But he, ſhe heard, has from the town remov'd,
And fled to rural ſeats with her he lov'd.
Reſolv'd to follow, void of ev'ry care,
And gath'ring vigour from the laſt deſpair.
For many a weary mile in wretched plight,
Forlorn ſhe wander'd, till the cloſe of night,
Then in the covert of a ſtraw-built ſhed,
At length reclin'd her ſad, and weary head;
A few hours journey ſhould next day have brought,
The hapleſs pilgrim to the ſpot ſhe ſought,
But that, by Chance or Fate's reſiſtleſs force,
Mid-way ſhe wander'd from her deſtin'd courſe.
A ſpecious winding op'ning on her view
Its devious track her falt'ring ſteps purſue:
Down through the dreary dale ſhe held her way,
Nor reach'd its end till the decline of day.
The valley open'd on a foreſt wild,
Where mazy paths the traveller beguil'd;
While the red ſun roll'd ſwiftly down the ſky,
And riſing clouds obſcur'd the day's broad eye;
Autumnal vapours reſted on the hills;
The fogs roſe darkling from the fields and rills;
Meteors preſaging ſtorms, with dreadful light,
Hover'd around, and ſhot acroſs the night.

Bleak

Bleak through the drooping trees the tempeſt roar'd,
And each receſs with piercing blaſt explor'd,
Dropp'd the ſad leaves from bending branches ſhed,
And o'er the ground a ruſſet mantle ſpread.—
Here firſt her ſteps the lonely wand'rer ſtays,
And with a groan the diſmal ſcene ſurveys,
Gloomy and dark; for Night's fair Planet ſhrouds
Her maiden radiance in a veil of clouds:
Loud and more loud, the mutt'ring thunders roll,
With lightnings darting quick from pole to pole,
Nor long alternately diſtinct and ſlow,
Burſt the dread peals, the livid flaſhes glow,
But one continu'd glare, one bellowing ſound,
Breaks forth and echoes though the blue profound,
Rends the vex'd air, and rocks the ſolid ground.—
Amid this ſcene, beneath an oaken ſhade,
By thin-ſpread leaves, and nodding branches made,
By claſping miſletoe unſightly preſs'd;
Where many a bird obſcene had made her neſt,
Deſpairing, faint, the ſad MELISSA throws
Her weary burthen, and invokes repoſe.
And here, ev'n here, had woo'd it to her ſide,
But what the body ſought, the tortur'd ſoul deny'd.

AH! how unlike the ſcenes her youth diſplay'd,
To the ſoft, tranquil, inoffenſive maid!

Deep

How chang'd the ſad MELISSA now appears!
How counts her ſighs, and drinks her falling tears!
Tears vainly ſhed for many a ſecret crime,
That ſtains the rolls of her departed time!—
Her waning form keen Hunger's power betrays,
And ſcorching Thirſt, which on her entrails preys;
Deep marks of Grief her faded viſage plough,
And gloomy Care ſits heavy on her brow:
Sorrow, Remorſe, and Shame, a hideous train!
Sickneſs, and Want, and heart-diſtracting Pain;
With conſcious Guilt, that ſharpeſt Anguiſh breeds,
And fell Deſpair, that prompts to blackeſt deeds:
All theſe within her tortur'd boſom ſwell,
Rage, and diſtract her with the pains of hell,
Baniſh ſweet ſleep, or to her cloſing eye,
Ten thouſand dreadful dreams of woe ſupply.

FROM hours of darkneſs, and from ſcenes of pain,
Beyond what pen can paint, or poet feign;
From gloomy viſions, ſqualid forms of night,
At length reliev'd, wiſh'd morn' ſalutes her ſight,
When through the wood ſhe ſees, with manly grace,
A youthful hunter ruſhing to the chace;
And nearer as his ſtately courſer drew,
The ſad MELISSA met his wond'ring view;—

Not ſuch as once, when freſh in blooming youth,
She trod the paths of innocence and truth,
But loſt to dignity and native worth,
Prone like ſome reptile on her mother earth,
Drench'd with her tears, which in profuſion flow,
The ſport of outward ſtorms, the prey of inward woe.

The pitying ſtranger plac'd him by her ſide,
And tender words, the balm of minds, apply'd.
But ah! what tortures rent his throbbing breaſt,
When to his ſight, his ſiſter roſe confeſs'd.—
What pow'r of verſe, what language can diſplay,
The dreadful meeting of that fatal day;
While burthen'd Nature labour'd to impart,
Each various paſſion ſtruggling in the heart!
In *hers*, ſharp anguiſh, mix'd with guilty ſhame,
For Virtue loſt, Peace fled, and ruin'd Fame.
In *his*, a friend and brother's mingled pain,
And conſcious worth, and grief that ſwell'd in vain!

Gently he rais'd her from the dewy ground,
And led her where ſhe needful ſuccours found,
Then bade with ſpeed to bear her to his ſeat,
Not diſtant far, a fair and calm retreat,
(For not long ſince from India's ſultry ſhore,
Arriv'd, his guardian uncle now no more,

Heir

Heir to his wealth, in his dear native ſoil
He fix'd, t' enjoy the fruitage of his toil)
Soon from his friends diſmiſs'd, in haſte return'd
The pious brother o'er his ſiſter mourn'd;
A thouſand queſtions aſks, and anſwers hears,
Which fill his heart with grief, his eyes with tears:
And now he ſees her loſt, afflicted, low,
Swift verging to the period of her woe.
All aids are call'd; but ev'ry aid proves vain,
To chace her ſickneſs, or diſpel her pain:
In ev'ry pulſe grim Death's triumphant pow'r,
Strikes—and proclaims th' inevitable hour.
What dread reflexions on her couch attend,
Her pains imbitter, and diſturb her end!
With tears, with ſighs, with heart-coroding care,
And all the torments of extreme deſpair,
To higheſt Heav'n the ſad MELISSA turns
Her faded eyes;—her ſwelling boſom burns
With ſpeechleſs anguiſh; death at laſt reliev'd,
Her weary'd body, and the grave receiv'd.
Pangs, mortal Pangs! her wounded ſpirits feel,
And tortures ſharper than the burning ſteel
Inflicts; till life's frail lamp forgoes its fires;
She faints, ſhe ſinks, and with a groan expires.
In blooming youth, in prime of life ſhe fell,
And, full of ſorrows, bade the world farewell;

Doom'd

Doom'd in her early days the ills to prove,
That puniſh vicious deeds, and wait on lawleſs love.—

Oh! may each fair, who reads this tale of woe,
Whoſe pitying tears for loſt Melissa flow,
Still ſtrive her faults and hapleſs end to ſhun,
Nor be, like her, by Paſſion's reign undone,
Avoid in time the ſtorms of adverſe Fate,
Nor ſtay to prove them and repent too late!—
So may our land, for beauty far renown'd,
With ev'ry female excellence be crown'd;
With Chaſtity, the ornament of youth,
With laſting Conſtancy and blameleſs Truth;
Whoſe ſweet memorial may for ever bloom
Thro' Death itſelf, and triumph o'er the tomb!—
Be to our Foes the cruel taſk aſſign'd,
To ſtain the chaſte, corrupt the virtuous mind.
Be ours t' inſtruct each youth and artleſs fair,
To trace ſtrict Honour's paths with pious care,
Quit every vicious, ev'ry ſordid aim.
And ſoar on eagle-wing to honeſt Fame!
Till, full of days, they gain the arduous prize,
And lift their Country's glory to the ſkies,
'Till diſtant lands the ſacred truth ſhall own,
That Virtue's guard ſupports fair Freedom's throne.

FINIS.